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## PSD students staying close for college

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It seems that those who live in Fort Collins want to stay in Fort Collins, especially when it comes to choosing a college.

Most Poudre School District seniors are choosing to attend college in Colorado, and those who stay in-state overwhelmingly enroll at Colorado State University or Front Range Community College, according to National Student Clearinghouse, a nonprofit that verifies academic achievement and tracks where students go to college.

In 2006, 874 of 1,113 college-enrolled PSD graduates -78 percent - enrolled at an in-state school. That left 239 students who went to an out-of-state school.

The numbers haven't changed much in the past five years. In 2001, 79 percent of PSD grads who enrolled in college did so at a Colorado school; in 2003, 81 percent of graduates enrolled in-state.

PSD grads who choose four-year Colorado institutions pick CSU by more than a 2-to-1 margin over the University of Colorado-Boulder and the University of Northern Colorado combined, according to the National Student Clearinghouse.

Students are sticking close to their hometown for a variety of reasons, from the financial advantages of paying in-state tuition to the comfort of having family close by.

"I think a lot of them know they have a great college right here," said Diane Campbell, a college and career counselor at Fossil Ridge High School. "A lot of their parents are CSU alumni. They're committed Ram families."

### 'Why would you move?'

Brittany Ellis, a senior at Poudre High School this year, is excited to go to college next year but isn't so keen on leaving her friends and family behind.

"I'm planning to stay in-state because of the costs of out-of-state tuition," she said. "Plus, you don't have to move all the way down there and start over. It's easier that I already live here."

Ellis is looking at CSU or UNC, both schools that are so close to her family that she could live at home and commute to campus regularly if she wanted. She said the idea of living in a different town and starting on her own, although appealing, can wait.

"I can do it once I graduate (from college), and that's something I plan to do," she said.

Rocky Mountain High School senior Nick Pabo wants to stick with an in-state school, partly because of the tuition costs, but also because he will be able to keep up with his skiing and attend nationally ranked schools.

"We think he can get a good education in-state," said Karla Fossoy, Nick's mother. "Why would you move away when you could ski here and it's such a nice climate?"

## 'A lot to offer'

Chrystal Kelly, a counselor at Rocky Mountain High School, grew up in Wisconsin where she and most of her classmates went to another state for their college experience, so she was surprised when she came to Colorado and saw the number of students who wanted to stay in Colorado after high school.

"As I'm talking with my seniors now, a majority are saying they want to stay in Colorado, and it has to do with the outdoor activities or the programs offered," she said. "People are also very close-knit with their families in Fort Collins. It has been interesting for me to see how many really do stay right here in town."

Kelly said she's talked to graduates who initially decided to attend a school in another state but ultimately decide to return to Fort Collins and enroll at CSU.

"They said the feeling they had in Fort Collins was different from the places they went to school, and they liked how they felt when they were in Fort Collins," she said.

Fort Collins high schools aren't the only ones sending large numbers of Colorado graduates to CSU. Of the 16,917 new students at CSU in the 2006-07 school year, 3,770 students were from Larimer County, while Arapahoe and Jefferson counties in the Denver metro area each sent about 2,000 students to CSU, according to the CSU Fact Book.

James Murphy has three boys in PSD schools and although they're all too young to be moving out anytime soon, he recently purchased a bed-and-breakfast with a three-bedroom apartment near CSU, perfect for three college students.

"I told them their choice is cheap rent or you can go out of state," he said. "But I go back and forth. I'd like to keep them close, but then I think they should get the full college experience."

Murphy's wife, Cynthia, thinks the first two years of college might be easier on her sons if they have the support of their parents.

"You're closer to family and support, especially in those first two years," she said. "I think Colorado also has a whole lot to offer as far as what they want to study."

Dave Lechtenberg, whose two daughters are in 11th and eighth grades at Rocky Mountain High School and Blevins Junior High, respectively, said there are certain advantages to having his children nearby.

"If they have any medical issues or personal things, they're closer to home," he said. "Part of the money they save on tuition they can spend on grad school."

But in his family, there's only one real factor for deciding whether to send his kids to college in Colorado or another state.

"It's not necessarily better to go out-of-state or in-state, it's what the best fit is for the kids," Lechtenberg said.